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BANDAR-LOG OR BANDAR-BEE?

PROLOGUE

From the time a monkey opens his eyes in the morning until drowsiness overpowers him at night, he is pretty much a law unto-himself. He does anything he wants to, when he wants to, and as long as he wants to. A whimsical individualism sums up his philosophy of life. The day's end finds him just where he was in the morning. The tribe—bandar-log, Kipling calls them—respond to any leader of the moment and as quickly quit him to follow another or to fetch up individually with a brand-new, suddenly-caught and all-absorbing idea.

Like any other philosophy, it is a charming one if you like the net results of it. The monkey does. On the contrary, the bee doesn't. The bee insists on organization by functions. His philosophy is self-sacrificing, vigorous and stern—a Spartan philosophy applied to production. "Beeficiency" is the Taylor System raised to the nth power; and the bee doesn't get the honey.

If the bee had sense, he'd maintain his present organization a few hours a day—which would easily supply his wants—and be a bit bandar-logish the balance of the time. But he cannot. The reason is because he doesn't think. He's a machine that is a part of a bigger machine. On the other hand, if he did think, he'd immediately tend to become individualistic, and the moment that happened the organization would begin to wobble. There would be argument about how the comb should be built, who should build it, who should boss it, how much honey should go to each; societies for the prevention of this and that would be formed. Social workers must eat; so must bosses; so must societies for the prevention of things.

Nature did not see fit to devise a species having the merits of bandar-log and bee,—a sort of bandar-bee.

A bandar-bee would help us a lot just now. It would be the real super-thing. It would be highly coöperative for a few

working hours and highly individualistic the rest of the day. It would accept the notion that working together bee-fashion is the answer to the question of maximum production in minimum time; but being a super-thing, it would reject the notion that the honey gathered should all get into the hands of a few crafty speculators to be sold back at the speculators' price. It would control distribution with the same bee-like coöperative efficiency that it used in production.

It would accept the axiom that self-expression is necessary to a thinking super-thing—that monkey play in a monkey way is after all the best fun in life. It would approve the bandar-log system, in which the individual in his idle hours may sit on a limb and philosophize, or try a new way of weaving twigs, or join the bunch in a frolic, or play with the kids.

Obviously the bandar-bee would be a clear and direct thinker. He would be an intense individualist—so intense an individualist that in order to have the maximum number of hours a day for individualism, he would sink his individualism when he came to his production and distribution hours, and be an intense coöperator. He would treat as wasters those super-bees who would work themselves and others without any thought of the monkey play merely to amass a personal pile of honey. There would be piles of honey, adequate personal piles, but not huge ones.

Individualism and self-interest are about the same thing. The date when the bandar-bee will appear on the earth depends upon the amount of hammering which mankind must undergo to pound into it a realization of the fact that in the long run self-interest can be most permanently promoted by intense and unselfish coöperation in production and distribution.

HERMAN SCHNEIDER in the
Engineering News Record.